

FAITH IN CHRIST
NO. 3095

TO MEN OF BUSINESS
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“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”
Acts 16:31

THE subject which I have chosen for this morning, and which may God the Holy Spirit bless to us, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the way of salvation. Nothing can be of more importance than this subject, and therefore nothing will more thoroughly interest a company of practical businessmen.

The preaching of the Gospel has become, happily, very common in these days. You may hear it at the corner of the streets, and any day you may have the same message pushed into your hands in the form of a tract as you go about your business. Since the late revival, when so many were drawn together to hear the Word, I should hope that there are few now among us who are unaware that the religion of the Gospel sets forth faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation.

I have no doubt that there may remain a remnant to whom this will be news, but in this city, after the great stir that was made, I should suppose that at least the vast majority of intelligent, educated people know that this is the teaching of Christ's ministers—that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ is not condemned, but has passed from death unto life.

Salvation by grace through faith is no new doctrine. In addition to its being in the Word of God, as taught by our Lord and His apostles, it is the distinguishing doctrine of the Christian religion all through its history, and it is always clearest when that Christianity is most pure. Especially is it the very heart and essence of Protestantism.

When Luther was upon the Santa Scala at Rome, hoping to earn merit and indulgences by creeping up and down that idolized staircase upon his knees, repeating many prayers, this text came to him, “The just shall live by faith,” and he started up and forsook his superstitions once for all. Finding peace by faith in Jesus, he began at once to declare to others the message which had brought life and light and freedom and joy to his own soul.

The Reformers, following Luther's example, made this the cardinal point of their preaching, and today it is still true that the article of a standing or a falling church is the doctrine of justification by faith, or that men, believing in Jesus Christ, are accounted just before the bar of God.

Let me set forth the manner of this doctrine. We have sinned against God, and it is inevitable that sin should be followed by punishment. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” and a judge who never punishes does not do right, but neglects his office. God, who is all love, as a necessary consequence is also sternly just, for the omission of justice from His character would be the omission of an essential ingredient of love. God, therefore, must punish sin, and every transgression must have its just recompense of reward. But His only begotten Son, in wondrous compassion to our souls, came into this world, took upon Himself our nature, and veiled the Godhead in human flesh, and being found in fashion as a man, He suffered in our room and place and stead the penalty which was due to the law of God.

*“He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire.”*

He took the debts of this people upon Himself, and upon the cross, by death, discharged them all, so that they are blotted out and can never be mentioned against His people any more forever. But who are His people? Who are the people for whom He died? Who are those for whom He was an actual, literal and efficient substitute? They are known by this—that they believe in Him. According to His own saying, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

Our Lord tells us that the Son of man was lifted up “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And yet again, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” By His death our Lord has made a full atonement for the sins of all who believe in Him, and they are therefore justified in the sight of God.

This believing in Christ has been illustrated in a great many ways, and I do but repeat what you have often heard. Believing is relying upon, or *trusting*. It is not a mere assent to a dogma, or the acknowledgment of a fact of the past. It is trust—trust in that Christ who died upon the cross, that through His merit, He can remove the guilt and punishment of sin, and also trust in that Christ who rose from the dead and is gone into heaven, that by the power of His eternal Spirit, He can cleanse us from the dominion and habit of sin. That is the faith which saves—trust in the living Jesus, who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.

We have heard faith illustrated by the picture of a child in a burning house. In vain does he attempt to escape from the fire. The flames are bursting into the room, he rushes to an upper window, he hangs there grasping the sill. Can he be saved? Yes, a strong man stands beneath him and cries, “Drop into my arms, I will catch you.” The boy looks down, he observes that the man is strong. He believes that fact, but that belief does not save him, though it leads up to it.

The act which really saves him is when trustfully he lets go of every other hold, and simply drops into the arms which are ready to receive him. Here you and I, by nature, hang in danger, and Christ beneath us says, “Drop, and you shall be safe in the arms of Jesus.” The act of faith is not believing that Christ is an actual person, nor the believing that He is able to save us, but the practical act of the mind arising out of the two beliefs which leads us to give up everything else, and trust to Him.

I remember hearing an illustration of faith which struck me very much. It came from an idiot. They had been teaching him all they could, but it was weary work. He had a little brain left, and after long teaching, and especially teaching him the great doctrine of faith, one of the teachers began to question him and said, “John, have you a soul?” The poor creature replied, “Nay, I have no soul.” The teacher felt grieved, and thought that he had spent his labor for nothing, but the poor fellow went on to say, “I had a soul once, but I lost it, and Jesus Christ found it, and so I always let Him keep it, and so it is His and not mine.”

Truly, the very essence of faith lies there—the consciousness of being lost in ourselves and found in Christ, and the leaving of one’s soul in Jesu’s hands. When we go to Christ, faith does very much the same as when a man takes his money and deposits it at the bank. I see you come up to the counter and pay in very large sums of money, but you do not come back in half-an-hour and say, “Show me my money.” You do not stand there at the counter half the day to watch the sovereigns as they are counted in order that you may make sure that your money is safe, no, you trust in the bank and go your way.

So do we deposit our souls in the hands of Christ, committing them to Him as unto a faithful Creator, and then we say with the apostle Paul, “I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him unto that day.”

Now, this believing in Christ has appeared to some persons to be far too simple, and they have said, “Well, but why is not everybody saved, if they are to be saved merely by trusting in Christ?” Truly, it is very simple, and yet of all the mental acts that are ever performed by mankind, this is one of the most difficult. “How so?” say you. I will express myself in a paradox, its easiness makes it hard. Let the story of Naaman illustrate it.

He comes in great pomp from Syria to be healed by Israel's prophet. He was a great man with his master, his retinue was considerable, and therefore with no little self-importance he drove in his chariot to the prophet's door, hoping to be healed of his leprosy. The prophet only sent him a message—"Go wash in Jordan seven times," Naaman was angry. He thought that surely the prophet would come out to him—such a great man as he was, and that he would go through certain ritualistic performances, and among other things, strike his hand over the place, and cure the leper. But "Wash in Jordan seven times! Does he insinuate that I want washing?"

The prescription was too commonplace and the course of cure by far too simple. It was too hard for him because it was so easy, and he turned and went away in a rage. But his servants wisely said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, would'st thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he says to thee, Wash, and be clean." Had not the servants been wiser than the master, Naaman would have gone away with his leprosy uncured.

And so it is all the world over, our proud hearts reject the simple, artless, unencumbered plan of—believe and live. If there were orders given today from heaven that if we went on pilgrimage from Bishopsgate to John O'Groat's House barefooted we would be saved, many of us would be on the road at once.

But when the message of mercy consists only of, "Believe and live"—when God declares that we have only to trust His Son, and rest in the atonement which He has made, we say, "No, it is too simple a business." The difficulty lies only in our proud hearts, but they are so lofty and self-sufficient that they do not readily stoop to be saved by another's merits, and never, until the Spirit of God brings us down humbly to feel our need of such an atonement, are we willing to accept the salvation of Jesus Christ.

But simple as the whole matter is, there is a great misunderstanding about it among some who look unfavorably upon evangelistic efforts. I have noticed in the newspapers a controversy which arises from a misunderstanding as to what faith is. Somebody has very severely condemned a hymn which says—

*"Nothing, either great or small—
Nothing, sinner—no;
Jesus did it—did it all,
Long, long ago."*

Now it has been supposed that we teach that faith in Christ, altogether apart from moral character or obedience to the law of God, will save the soul, and it is then charged that we undervalue the decencies and moralities of life. It is no means so. We have never taught that a faith which is without works will save a man, for we know that such a faith is dead, and is therefore of no value.

We do teach—and every man who rightly preaches the Gospel teaches—that we are saved by faith in Christ and not by works. But we also teach that he who is saved, is saved from sin, is saved from unholiness, is saved to morality and to something a great deal better—to holiness and careful walking before the living God.

What is salvation? It is necessary to explain that word in order to make this matter clear. Salvation is not merely being snatched from hell and being admitted to heaven. The greatest trouble of a really awakened conscience is not hell, but sin. "How can I be saved from sin?" is the anxious inquirer's main question.

Since I spoke here last week I have received notes from persons present who have said, "Speak to us about how we can conquer besetting sins. Tell us how we can get supremacy over carnal lusts," and the like. That question I am answering now. Christ's salvation rescues men from themselves and frees them from the domination of evil. I would give nothing for a supposed deliverance from hell if it does not come by way of deliverance from sin. It is sin that makes hell, for there would be no hell if man had no evil within him, as there certainly can be no heaven for a man till he is made good and fit to dwell with

God, for the fire of hell is a guilty conscience before God, and the bliss of heaven is holiness and reconciliation to the Most High.

Now, this kind of salvation comes to a man by faith, or in other words by trusting Jesus to save him. It is not merely that I believe the fact that Christ died on the cross, I do believe that, but the mere historical belief in a past transaction will not save me. I trust in Him who died for me and believe that He will set me free from the power of my sins. Jesus Christ, who still lives in the highest heavens, says to me, "You are sick in soul, I can save you. Will you trust Me? You must trust, not anything you can do, or anything you can be, but trust Me." Very well, my reply to Him, if I am really led by the Spirit of God is, "Great physician of souls, I do trust You."

Now what follows upon trusting a physician? Obedience to his orders. Imagine a physician calling upon a person who is sick, and promising him a cure upon the one condition that he will have perfect confidence and leave himself in the doctor's hands.

The physician remarks, "Your disease is a very terrible one. What are you accustomed to eat?" The patient at once mentions certain articles of diet, and the physician shakes his head and says, "If you continue to eat in that fashion, I can do nothing for you. You really must give up the unhealthy matters upon which your disease feeds." Then he adds, "Here is the medicine which I prescribe. I have never known it fail. You are quite sure you trust me?" "Yes, sir, implicitly." "Then all will be well."

The physician goes his way and calls again in due time, but the patient is not a bit better. "You are no better. How is this?" The doctor looks surprised. "What food have you been eating?" The patient tells him and it turns out that he has been taking precisely what he was forbidden to take.

"Well," says the doctor, "you do not trust me. You have no faith in me." "Oh yes I have, sir, I have the greatest possible faith in you." "Then why do you act in this fashion, you are mocking me? I consider myself to be trifled with and I shall have no more to do with the case unless I have your confidence. You have no faith in me if you persist in disobedience. You do not trust me unless you keep to the regimen which I prescribe. Did you take the medicine?"

"No, I did not like it. I tasted it and I did not admire the flavor, and so I set it on one side." "And yet you say that you trust me?" "Yes, and you said that if I trusted you, you would work a cure." "But," replies the physician, "you know what I meant and you are mocking me. You do not trust me at all, or else you would both forego what I forbid you, and gladly accept what I prescribe you."

Is not this reasonable? Carry it then into the matter of trust in Jesus. The faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which saves the soul shows itself in obedience to the precepts which He lays down, and in forsaking the habits which He condemns. This is the faith which we declare saves the soul, and I defy any man to say that there is aught in such teaching which is detrimental to morality or opposed to good works, nay, rather, but whatsoever things are pure and of good repute are fostered by such preaching, and are undoubtedly produced by the saving faith in Jesus Christ of which we speak.

Now, the assertion that simple faith in Jesus Christ will save a man from sin, and will ultimately make him perfect if it shall work in him by the power of the Spirit of God, is most reasonable. The natural and inevitable fruit of faith in Christ is holiness. For observe, we spoke last week about a child that had no love to its father, and of the great grief of the father's heart because the child was alienated. What would be one of the readiest ways to get back the boy's heart? If you can get that lad to believe in his father—to confide in his father, the affection which he had lost will come back again.

When a man trusts God and accepts His way of salvation, that trust naturally influences his affections, and through his affections it is sure to influence his life. That is clear enough to any man who chooses to remember the laws of the human mind. Confidence in a person's love tends to make us love him in return.

A sense of pardon is a wonderful curative of sin, and this comes by faith. The man who is conscious of being guilty is usually possessed by a sort of sullen despondency as to better things. The old proverb that you may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb operates on many a man, "I am lost," he says, "and if lost, I may just as well go in and enjoy myself while I am here."

But oh, when that man is led to believe Christ, quite another feeling possesses him. The joy of pardon banishes all gloom and he cheerfully cries, "How shall I continue in sin after such a loving forgiveness? Has Christ washed it all away and cast it all behind His back? Then will I labor with all my heart to show my gratitude to Him, and henceforth the evil which I once loved shall be detested by me." Many a man has felt more influence exerted upon his mind by the grace that has pardoned him than by the justice which threatened to punish him, and when God comes and deals with us in that fashion, assuring us that we are forgiven, there is a conquest attained over sin.

He who believes that he has been forgiven by the merit of the Redeemer's death, loves Christ, and let any man who loves Christ answer me—Is not the love of Christ the most potent force conceivable for delivering you from sin? You cannot see yonder cross, and mark the drops that flow from Jesus' wounds and say, "Thus my sins were washed away," and then go and offend Him. No, but for the love you bear His name, you feel ready and willing to do anything, and suffer anything, rather than grieve His Spirit.

The love of Christ constrains us to all sorts of self-denials and self-sacrifices when once we are fully possessed with it, it purges from all that is petty, mean, selfish, and impure, and as he who believes in Jesus Christ has a faith which works by love after this fashion, you can clearly see how faith leads on to a holy life.

There is one fact connected with our being saved through faith which ought always to be remembered. It is thought that if a man knows himself to be forgiven and saved he will go about the world and feel that he is somebody, and look down upon other people as if they were almost unworthy of his acquaintance. I have never met with any case where that has occurred, but still, it is thought that such would be the case.

But observe—if this salvation comes to a man not at all by his own merits, but only as the free gift of God, and if all that he has done has been to accept it and lay hold upon it by simple faith, instead of feeling proud he feels humbled by the great mercy which he has received. He cannot trace any of it to himself, so as to claim the smallest measure of credit for it, and so he is saved from the tendency to pride and Phariseism which otherwise his distinguished position as a saved soul might have suggested to him. The principle which delivers from pride and self-conceit, which is in itself no small salvation, is that of faith in Christ.

He who believes in Jesus has another means by which he overcomes sin, namely, that he reckons himself henceforth not to be his own but to be henceforth the property of his Redeemer. This rings in his ears—"For ye are not your own: you are bought with a price,"

And so, if he is true to his convictions, he cannot live to himself. He has higher aims and nobler objectives than any which concern his own personal advantages, he reckons that his time, his substance, his faculties, his position, do not belong to himself, but he uses them as a steward for his Master, and gives to his Lord the interest. I think I need not dwell longer on this point, for it will be clear to all who wish to see it, that faith in Jesus is a very operative faculty, and tends to promote holiness.

But faith is not that mere cold, barren thing which says, "The creed is true," and then doubles it up and forgets it, or puts it on the shelf all the week to be taken down on Sundays only, but it is a loving trust in Christ which changes the heart and affects the entire life. It is the grandest, greatest power ever seen on earth, for by it the Holy Spirit displays His might in the salvation of men.

But men and brethren, the proof of any theory must always lie in results. What are the facts? Has Gospel preaching produced morality, purity, holiness, or the reverse? There are some of us who have been preaching the doctrine of justification by faith for years. What have been the results? According to the opinion of some, we ought to have gathered around us a frightful nest of hypocrites who would strut about the world, looking down upon everybody else but really being the most libidinous and licentious of men since they are free from all the restraints which are supposed to arise out of the doctrine of salvation by works.

That, of course, would be the consequence if it be indeed true that justification by faith discourages morality. The preacher ought to be the center of a happy hunting ground for the police if our objectors

have any foundation for their allegations. But how have we found it? I will not vaunt myself beyond my line and measure, but I will say that the purest, holiest, most honest and most worthy people I have ever known are believers in this truth.

Do you tell me that they were naturally excellent and would never have gone wrong whatever they had believed? I have a reply for this also. I know scores of those who were once degraded women, and even harlots of the street, who at this moment, are chaste women, scrupulous in purity, and loving their Lord.

I know thieves, drunkards, persons of all classes and castes, from whom I have heard the story of their lives, and who have told me that they would have continued as they were, sinful and leading others into sin, if it had not been that they heard of free salvation through the precious blood, and believed and lived.

We cannot bring these people up before you to speak personally, because you yourselves see that it would be an indiscreet and improper proceeding, but if the case had to be tried like any other in a court of law we could produce proofs by the hundred that faith is the friend of morals and the source of purity. Ay, we could not only bring you brands plucked out of the fire from the lower ranks of society, but there are gentlemen who are equally illustrious instances of divine grace.

We have heard of gentlemen respected in their spheres who, nevertheless behind the wall, were living in fornication and adultery and all sorts of filthiness, but who, nevertheless, chanced to drop in and hear the Gospel and were led by grace to believe it, and their lives have become henceforth renewed and purified. It has been their earnest wish to undo the mischief they have done, and to live all the more devotedly to the glory of God because they know that they have done so much damage to society and to their own souls.

We are not here to unveil private lives, or make heroes out of great sinners, but we cannot and will not have it said that faith in Christ does not cleanse men when we know to the contrary. If, as I stand preaching on the Sabbath day, I were to say, "Let those who have felt the power of the Gospel and have been delivered by it from gross sin, stand up," there are not a few who would run the risk of being thought immodest and who would rise and say, "Yes, blessed be JEHOVAH Jesus' name, we are brands plucked out of the burning. We have felt the transforming power of divine grace."

What has done this except the Gospel? Truly I know not. I heard a missionary say the other day that he stood in public places in India and preached the unity of the Godhead, and that when the Hindus rose and objected, he knew their objections and answered them. Then he preached the deity of Christ, and the Mohammedan opposed him. "But," he said, "I was so familiar with the controversy that I could reply to all their remarks and win the victory.

I did this for years," said he, "but I saw small good come of it. But when I changed my plan and began to preach the great love of God to man through Jesus Christ, and taught them to believe and live, then came success, I saw them moved to tears, and converts came to prove the power of the Gospel."

What does Dr. Chalmers say—(no mean witness)—that for years he preached morality and virtue till he scarcely could find any in his parish, but when he began to preach Jesus Christ and simple faith in Him, then he saw the worst of the worst reformed, and men sought after holiness and truth.

We cannot but speak what we do know and testify what we have seen. The quaint old English proverb is that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," and one great proof of the Gospel lies in the effect that it produces. If, good sir, you profess to believe in Jesus Christ, and your faith does not affect your heart and your life, it is a counterfeit, and you will do well to be rid of it as soon as possible lest so suspicious an article should be found upon you.

My time has almost expired, and therefore let me use it in pleading with you. Jesus Christ has a great claim upon the faith of every one of us here present. My brethren, you who believe in Him do not believe in Him half enough. You who trust Him with your souls, should trust Him with everything else. Rely upon Him in providence as well as in grace.

To those who do not trust Him, let us say this. Do you believe in the New Testament? Is that to you an inspired volume? Then to you I speak. You believe that Jesus Christ is God, can you not trust your soul with God? What can be too hard for Him? What if you be guilty, cannot God pardon you? What if your heart be evil, cannot God change you? Cannot He who made you new-make you? Surely, then, to doubt God is insanity, since where there is omnipotent power there is no rational room for doubt.

Remember, next, that Christ came into this world commissioned by God to save. He did not come as an amateur, taking the office upon Himself without authorization. When He descended on the breast of Mary and lay in the manger, God sent Him with a high commission at His back, giving Him authority to be a Prince and a Savior. We may well trust the Messiah whom God, the everlasting One, sends with warrant unquestionable.

Remember too, that the work which He had to do He has altogether finished. To put away sin was Christ's work, He has put it away. Not a pang of punishment remains to be borne for sin by any one who believes in Jesus.

***“He to the utmost farthing paid
Whate'er His people owed.”***

He who believes in Christ may know that Christ took all the load of sin upon Himself—every particle of it, past, present, and to come—and threw it into the depths of the sea where it is drowned forever. It were somewhat harder to believe in a Christ who has to do this, than in a Christ who has done it, but Jesus claims our trust because He has already done the work.

Many like ourselves have been saved. Look at heaven—filling with the redeemed, and look at earth—how many still among us are wending their way to the blest abode. Trust Him of whom no man ever dared to say that He deceived him. I have stood by scores of dying beds, but I have never heard a Christian say, “I trusted in Christ, but He has failed me.” I have seen them with the clammy death sweat upon their brows, but I have never heard them say, “I die deceived, for I trusted Christ to support me now, and He has left me to perish.” Surely somewhere in the world someone would have found Him out by this time if He were not trustworthy.

But instead of it, we trust Him so implicitly that we wonder others do not, for we feel, for our own part, that if we had ten thousand souls we would ask for no other Savior, but would confide the whole ten thousand, and ten thousand more, in His once pierced hands.

Have you never trusted Him? Then, since He is worthy of your confidence, confide in Him now. Sitting in these benches, at this unusual hour for listening to the Gospel, hear this pleading voice—

***“Oh, believe the record true,
God for you His Son has given.
Ye may now be happy too,
Find on earth the life of heaven.”***

Rest in Jesus, and a thrill of life will go through you such as you have never felt before.

I saw not long ago a woman who said to me, “Is it indeed true that upon trusting in Jesus I shall be saved at once?” I replied, “It is even so.” “Why,” she said, “My father, when he got religion, was nearly six years a-getting it, and they had to put him in a lunatic asylum part of the time. I thought that there was no getting saved without going through a very dreadful process.”

I spoke to her of the person, and the work of Jesus, and repeated to her the divine command, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” She caught the idea, and obeyed the command. I perceived that she yielded to the truth, and really trusted, for I saw a change come over her face which betokened the rest of her soul. Those who are familiar with such scenes know what a beauty lights up the countenance of the plainest persons when they come to see the way of peace, and enter upon it. “I am saved,” said she, and she hastened off, saying, “I will get away now, for your time must

not be wasted. I am saved, and you can tell the truth to some others, and perhaps they will rejoice as I do.”

Are there none here this morning to whom this Gospel will be good news? Young man, it may be that you will begin this morning a new life, and that there will be for you a grand career in the service of God. The beginning of the new life is faith in Jesus Christ.

*“Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now;
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now!”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 3:1-21

Verses 1-2. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

When inquirers come to see any of you who are Christians, do not begin talking to them, but let them begin by telling you what they have to say, for it will probably guide you as to what you shall say to them in return. Our Lord Jesus could read all hearts. and He needed no one to tell Him what was there, yet for our sakes, He sets the example of letting Nicodemus speak first.

This man was a Pharisee, and consequently was apt to attach too much importance to the outward part of religion, so observe how the Savior deals with him by dwelling on the inner part of it—upon the necessity of the new birth. He has less to say to him about believing and more about experiential godliness, and the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart.

Our main business, in dealing with men’s souls, is not to teach them what they want to know, but what they really need to know, bringing forward ever that truth which, if it be not the most palatable, shall be the most profitable to them.

3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

“He has no idea of what it is, he cannot perceive it, he has not the faculty by which he could see or understand the meaning of the kingdom of God.”

4. *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?*

His religion was external, you see, he could not grasp the spiritual idea which Christ had set before him. This matter of the new birth is very simple to all of us who know what Jesus meant, but it was exceedingly difficult to Nicodemus, as it has been to all but those who have experienced it.

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

The entrance into that kingdom is by a new birth in which water and the Spirit of God are both needful. There is a cleansing, and there is a new creation. There is the cleansing water of the merit of Christ, and there is the divine operation of the Spirit of God. Or if the Savior only means entrance into His visible kingdom, then it is through baptism that the man outwardly makes his profession of faith in Christ. It is through the Spirit of God alone, however, that he really enters into the kingdom of God.

Note the distinction between seeing the kingdom and entering into it, no man can even see the kingdom of God, much less enter it, except by that new birth which is wrought only by the Holy Spirit.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh;*

No matter who the father is, nor who the mother is, there is no such thing as inherited godliness. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and nothing more, all that is born of the flesh cannot rise beyond its original source. However much the man may improve himself, our Savior’s words will still remain true, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh;”—

6. *And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

Everything is according to its birth, and according to its nature. The Spirit of God must, therefore, operate upon us, and we must have a new birth, if we are to see and to enter the kingdom of God.

7. *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

“Do not wonder at this, for it must be so. The first birth, at its best, can only give you flesh, there must be another birth, a birth from above, to bring you into the realm of spirit that you may understand and share in spiritual things.”

8. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst tell from whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

He is a mysterious personage, not to be understood by carnal man. You see his outward life, but you cannot see the hidden spring by which that life is moved and controlled, for that mysterious inner life is only discerned by those who possess it.

9-10. *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

“Do you profess to teach others, and have you never been taught this first great spiritual truth?” Nicodemus was not the last Rabbi who did not understand what it is to be born again, and it is greatly to be feared that there are still many, who are teachers of others, who yet have never experienced this all-important change. The Lord have mercy upon them!

11. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*

The testimony of Christ, and of His apostles, and of all true disciples of Christ is this—that there is such a thing as a new birth. Men may not believe that it is true, but for all that, it is as certain as any other fact in the history of the world. It is foolish for any to deny it because they have not experienced it themselves. Although they have not experienced it, others have, and those who declare that they have been born again are as honest, as reasonable, and as trustworthy as any other people in the world.

If any counsel had to prove his case in a court of law, by the mouth of five or six witnesses, I am sure that he would not want better witnesses than those who declare that they have been born again. Many of them are well known people of high repute, and their testimony ought to be believed.

But it is not a question of six, or a dozen, or a dozen thousand witnesses. There have been hundreds of thousands of men and women who have borne witness that a miraculous change has taken place in them, by which they have been born into a new world, and have received a new life, and the testimony of these witnesses ought to be believed. It was hard that Christ should have to say, “Ye receive not our witness.”

12. *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*”

For regeneration is, as it were, one of the commonplaces of the Christian religion, it is a thing that very often takes place among men, but if this foundation truth is not believed, how can men expect that yet higher truths shall be revealed to them?

13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

So far, this chapter treats of the new birth, and there are many people who are much perplexed because they cannot comprehend this great mystery. They ask, “How, then, can we be saved? Is there no way of salvation without the new birth?” Assuredly there is none, yet the way of salvation is very simple and clear. It is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” and it is very significant that

this chapter which, beyond any other, teaches the doctrine of the new birth, with equal clearness teaches the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ. Listen—

14-18. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

That is the proof of his condemnation, he must be an enemy to God who will not believe on His Son. He who refuses to believe the witness of God is, by that very fact, convicted and condemned, and if he had no other sin, it is sin enough to sink him to the lowest hell to deny the veracity of God, to make God a liar by refusing to believe in Jesus Christ His Son.

See, then, how these two truths are blended. “Ye must be born again,” and “he that believeth on him is not condemned.” Why is that? Because he is born again, that new birth has taken place in him, and eternal life is his because he has believed on the only begotten Son of God.

19-21. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

Now, my friend, are you willing to come to the light—to the light of Scripture—to the light of Revelation? If so, so far well. God grant us grace to feel that light is our friend, that we do not need to shun it, but desire to walk in it!

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.